She ran up the hill, striking at the trees with her bonnet. A woman, flushed

THE GIRL STOOD IN THE DOOR.

and angry-looking, met her near the door, and pointing to a churn standing in the shade near the corner of the house, said:

"Thar's that thing standin' thar all the mornin' and you a foolin' round down thar on the branch. You air gest a gittin' so yo' ain't no manner account on the face of the earth. Who was that down thar a scrappin' with you? But you neenter tell me—I know. It was that good-for-nothin' Sam Foster. A triflin'er wretch never lived on the face of the earth."

"He's goin' to be a poet," the girl replied, taking an apron off a lilac bush and tying the strings about her waist.

"And what's that, for goodness' sake?" the woman exclaimed. "He'd better be thinkin' about cuttin' them sprouts outen that pore old hill-side field that he's afflicted with. Conscience alive, I pity the woman he marries."

"I don't reckon he's old enough yet to think about marryin' anybody," the girl replied. Having tucked up her skirts she had begun to ply the churn dasher.

"Not old enough," the woman snapped. "My sakes alive, I'd like to see a fool too young to think about gittin' married these here days. And I warrant you that thar air gals fool enough to marry him. Oh you neenter jerk that dasher around, for you know it's a fact. I do believe you'd be fool enough yourself."

The girl was silent. She had ceased to ply the churn dasher, she stood motionless, gazing down the slope toward the pool where she and the young fellow had watched the bass and the perch.

"Yes," the woman repeated, "I do believe that you'd be fool enough to marry him yourself."

"Well, if I was to, I might not have to churn all the time," the girl replied, resuming her work.

"That's a fact," the woman quickly agreed. "Yes, that's a fact, for you wouldn't have nothin' to churn."

"Well, I'd rather not have nothin' to churn. I wish there wasn't a cow nowhere. I hate 'em. All the time goin' about cawin' folks to churn. If I was to marry a man I'd see that he didn't have a cow."

"You can safely marry Sam, then. He'll never have one—he'll never have anything."

"He'll have a wife if he marries, I reckon."

"Don't you sass me, Nell. I won't have it."

"I wouldn't sass you, mammy. You know I wouldn't; but he would have a wife if he married, wouldn't he? If he didn't there wouldn't be any use in marryin', would there?"

"Hush sich foolishness. It would depend altogether on the woman he got."

"Suppose he got me?"

"Look here, Nell. You ain't thinkin' about marryin' him, air you?"

"'Lowed I might, as he ain't got a cow, and that's about all I'd ask of him. But, mammy, suppose I was to tell you that I love him?"

"I would think you had lost your senses."

"Well, then, I reckon I have, for I do love him. Yes, I love him so much that I despise him and I could knock him down."

"Gracious alive!" the woman cried. "You've upset the churn and all the milk's gone. Come back here to me. You'll break your neck a runnin' off down thar. You are the fetchtakedest creeter I ever seed."

The girl came back, laughing an apology for the mischief which she had wrought, and the woman was scolding her, though with lessening harshness, when the mirthful apology and the reprimand were put to an end by the sudden appearance of a man, who, lazily turning a bend in the path that ran round a corner of the house, came slouching toward the woman. He held up a piece of paper, fluttered it, and drawlingly said:

"Got this here fer Miss Nell."

"For me?" the girl cried, running toward him. She snatched the piece of paper, ran away a short distance, halted, and read the following:

"Now that I have found out you hate me and don't want to be kissed all the time, I am goin' away to be a poet, and when I am one I know you will love me some and will let me kiss you a part of the time at least. If I don't become a poet I never will come back again, for bein' a poet is the only way I can win your love, for that is the only way I can learn to tell you how much I love you, and when I have done that you can't help lovin' me, for then you will see my soul all blazin' for you. I don't reckon I can get to be a poet before Christmas, but I am sure I will by then, so you may look for me Christmas; and if by any strange possibility I don't get to be a poet in time to reach home by Christmas, you just keep on a despisin' me as much as you please, but you must keep on waitin', and don't let anybody else grab you up like the bass done the pearch, for as I tell you I'll be back.

"Yours, SAM."

A change came with the reading of the note. The noon in her eyes sobered into a twilight. For the first time in her life she was serious. She turned to her mother and said:

"I am awful sorry I turned over that churn."

The woman was surprised. "What's the matter, dear? Never mind about the churn. What's in the note, Nellie?"

"Nothin'; only Sam has gone away and won't come back tell he's a poet and I'm afraid he won't be one before Christmas and I want him now."

"But maybe he can git the job before then. It's a good while till Christmas, and a good many things mout turn up 'twixt now and then. Don't fret none."

But she did fret. She fretted for weeks at a time; at morning when she saw the dew on the trumpet vine, at noon when she stood, gazing into the blue pool, at evening when the whip-poorwill sang his sad song. The season ripened, the grain was reaped, the leaves had fallen—Christmas was approaching, coming slowly down, it seemed, from the browning hills.

Christmas Eve. Christmas night. The girl stood in the door, listening. No sounds except the faint hack, hack, hack of an evening's woodchopper, far away, and the lowing of a cold and desolate cow in the ravine. He did not come.

The grass was green again, the leaves came out, the blackberry briars were in bloom, the water pouring over the shelf of slate struck a sweeter, sadder note. The season drew a long breath and another change came.

It was Christmas night, and the girl stood in the door. The belated woodchopper's hack, hack, hack was heard, and the same cold cow was lowing in the ravine.

"Good evening."

"Gracious alive, is this you, Sam?"

"Yes," he said, still standing back from her. The firelight falling upon him showed that he was well dressed.

"Won't you come in, Sam?"

"No, for you'll still have to despise me."

"Why?"

Because I'm not a poet."

"What are you, Sam?"

"I am an agent for a patent churn dasher."

She sprang forward and threw her arms about him. "Oh, I am so glad," she cried. "And you may kiss me all the time."

### A CONSIDERATE LOTHARIO.

Don Juan O'Rafferty — Sure, and shave smooth the convexity of me upper lip. I want to make it aisy for the ladies until this missletoe business is over.—Texas Siftings.

### Something for the Boy.

Office Boy—Are you going to give me anything for Christmas?

Boss—Oh, yes; a few errands to do.—Detroit Free Press.